Advertising has an array of positive and negative impacts on society; this essay discusses how advertising impacts us and the society and to what extent it does so.

Advertising positively impacts the society by enabling new and existing businesses to make potential customers aware of their products and services. Individuals are also able to earn a living online by producing content and earning commissions through running advertisements or affiliate marketing. This helps to facilitate business growth and individual wealth that in turn leads to the growth of the economy. To add to this the advertisement industry itself is huge, providing thousands of jobs and generating millions of dollars, making advertisement not only an essential part of the society we live in but also an essential part of our economy. Advertising is also used for social campaigns such as charity helpline ads like the Samaritans, who post their ads at bridges and places where people are most likely to commit suicide, so that, people in such positions, can reach out for help. Charities are also able to request public support through advertising.

Despite all this, advertising is intrusive and influences society negatively through such things as the distortion of the perception of a healthy body image that leads people to feel unhappy with their own bodies (Lavine, 2009). Furthermore, Advertising promotes consumerism which results in waste, as people buy more frequently and reuse and recycle less. The constant exposure to advertisements also results in ad clutter that causes ad fatigue (Types of Advertising, 2021) and information overload. This could also make it harder for people to make decisions about their purchases over competing brands through what is known as the paradox of choice (Schwartz, 2004).

According to Mackenzie (Mackenzie, 1986) the extent to which we are influenced by advertising depends on our interests/knowledge and needs. For example, we are influenced more by advertisements of what we need and therefore want to know more about. If someone is already thinking of buying a phone, phone advertisements are more enticing and influential than to someone who is happy with the phone they have. Similarly, individuals are influenced more by adverts of things that they have knowledge of and an

interest in. For instance, football fans are influenced more by adverts regarding football compared to non-football fans. The impact of advertisement may also vary among different societies. Societies which are constantly bombarded with adverts, could be more likely to employ ad avoidance strategies (Speck, 1997) and may be more desensitised to advertisements, requiring advertisers to be louder and more alluring to capture people's attention. While in societies with less exposure to media, even the simplest adverts may be very influential.
As a final consideration, it could be argued that advertisement reinforces the current societal ideas and opinions. For instance, when the dangers of smoking were not public knowledge and smoking was considered cool, adverts would reinforce these opinions. However, today the advertisement of cigarettes is banned in some nations (euro.who.int, 2013) and smoking is rarely seen in adverts. This therefore conveys to us and is supported by Richard Pollay (Pollay, 1986), that as much of an impact that advertisements have on society, so too does society have an impact on the advertisements that are produced. It might even be fair to propose the idea that we can learn a lot about a society by studying the advertisements that are presented to it.

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